



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

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State Emergency Operations Center continues to assess storm impact across state, coordinate assistance; American Red Cross opening shelters as many face night without heat, electricity

Safety still a concern with more than 226,000 Illinois homes still without power

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today said the State Emergency Operations Center in Springfield continues working with local emergency management officials to assess the impact from the winter's first major snowstorm and coordinate assistance to travelers stranded at rest stops on I-80 and I-74. The storm, which began yesterday and continued until about mid-day Friday, dumped heavy rain, sleet, ice and snow on many parts of the state causing widespread power outages, numerous traffic accidents and other problems for people throughout the state.

"The winter storm that blanketed Illinois has mostly passed but left hundreds of thousands of people without electricity," Gov. Blagojevich said. "We're continuing to work with local officials to make sure that they're getting the help they need to keep the people in their communities safe."

Representatives from the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), Illinois National Guard (ING), Department of Transportation (IDOT), the American Red Cross (ARC), Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Illinois State Police (ISP) have been coordinating to get food and emergency supplies to travelers stranded at two rest areas, one on I-80 near Princeton and the other on I-74 east of Galesburg. Approximately 50 travelers are stranded at each rest area.

One hundred meals were picked up by an IDOT truck in Galesburg and delivered to site near the rest area on I-74, where they were handed off to DNR officers on snowmobiles for final delivery

to the rest stop. Another 100 meals will be picked up by an ING Blackhawk helicopter and dropped off near the I-80 rest area, where DNR snowmobiles will pick them up and deliver them to the rest area. In addition, ISP is picking up 100 more meals in Princeton and will deliver them to the nearby rest stop with a four-wheel drive vehicle. The additional meals will be available for travelers who, once the lengthy backup on the eastbound side of I-80 is cleared, stop at the rest area looking for food.

State officials reported that by late afternoon Friday, approximately 226,000 homes were still without electricity. American Red Cross (ARC) chapters across the state continue to assess the need for shelter sites and warming centers. As of 3 p.m. Friday, the following ARC shelters sites have been opened:

Belleville – West Haven Elementary School, 118 West Haven School Road

Bloomington – Miller Park Pavilion

Decatur – MacArthur High School, 1155 North Fairview Avenue

Edwardsville – Liberty Middle School, 1 District Drive

Findlay – Findlay Christian Church, 202 West Division

Hillsboro – Hillsboro High School, 522 East Tremont

Jerseyville – Jerseyville City Hall, 115 East Prairie

Springfield – Lanphier High School, 1300 North 11th Street

Taylorville – Taylorville Junior High School, 120 East Bidwell

Waterloo – Zahnow Elementary School, 301 Hammacher Street

The American Red Cross shelters provide food and a secure place outside the elements. Emergency first aid is also available at each shelter. People may also contact their local emergency management offices for additional shelter sites in their areas.

Gov. Blagojevich encouraged people in affected areas to check on elderly neighbors who may be without heat and electricity and in need of assistance. “We need to reach out to our friends and neighbors who may be struggling alone in their cold and dark homes,” Gov. Blagojevich said. “If you know of someone who needs help, please contact your local law enforcement officials.”

While the storm system has moved out of the state, cold temperatures and power outages could make a hazardous situation. Below are several cold weather safety tips:

- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- Listen to the radio or television for weather reports and emergency information.
- If you have not heat, close off unneeded rooms and place towels or rags under the doors.

- Hang blankets over windows at night, but let the sun shine in during the day.
- Eat to supply heat, and drink non-alcoholic beverages to avoid dehydration.
- When using alternative heat from a fireplace, wood stove, space heater, etc., use safeguards and ensure proper ventilation.
- Refuel kerosene heaters outside and keep them at least three feet away from flammable objects.

Governor Blagojevich's Keep Warm Illinois website (keepwarm.illinois.gov) offer additional winter safety tips. Other winter and power outage-related information is available on the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) website at www.state.il.us/iema and at the ARC website at www.redcross.org.